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ABSTRACT

In 1968 the California Education Code section on physically handicapped minors was amended to include pregnant girls. This change was intended to give school districts the responsibility and the funds to develop special classes or schools for teenage pregnant girls. This special class makes it possible to provide more educational materials, equipment, and interdisciplinary services. Adolescent pregnancy requires the services not only of educators, but also of health, welfare, and social agencies. A major defense of the program is the fact that refusing the pregnant girl the opportunity to complete her education is not only a denial of the girl's rights, it also damages both the girl and society through increasing her chances of unemployment, underemployment, and, thus, welfare and dependency. This paper describes the program components and implications of two programs operating in three districts on the San Francisco Peninsula. Although operated differently, the goals and objectives of the two programs are similar. Their major goal is to provide each pregnant student an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and to provide her with a marketable entry-level skill for postsecondary employment or further educational achievement. (Author/IRT)

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COPING WITH TEEN-AGE PARENTS

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It is estimated by the Child Welfare League of America that one out of every 10 girls in the United States will become a mother while of high school age or younger. The vast majority of these mothers keep their babies; therefore, many children in this country are being reared by mothers who are still of school age, almost 40% of whom are single.[1]

The pregnant teen-age girl has become a national concern of school systems, for statistics show that over 210,000 school-age girls give birth each year in this country, that their number is increasing about 3,000 annually,[2] and that pregnancy is the largest known cause for secondary school girls to drop out of school.

In California, the married mothers, ages 15-19, totaled 33,457 (65%); the unmarried mothers numbered 18,028 (35%) in 1973. Nearly one-third of all married teenagers had a baby in 1973. It is a fact that children born out of wedlock are, to an unusual degree, unplanned and often unwanted. These children are atypically frequent victims of parental and societal abuse.[3]

Developmentally, the teen-aged mother's self-concept may not be particularly well established. While most mothers

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1 "Questions and Answers on School-Age Pregnancy," Consortium on Early Childbearing and Childraising; Child Welfare League of America, Inc., Washington, D. C.

2 "Education for the Pregnant Minor," Harriet Dohrmann and Helen M. Jones.

3 Public Education and Research Committee of California, Berkeley (PERC).

are probably insecure in the parenting role with their first child, the young mother is even more insecure. This insecurity is particularly likely to occur in young mothers who live with their parents.

Problems involving "growing up," in which rebelliousness is combined with dependency, are a part of adolescence. The adolescent girl who is pregnant has additional problems--the risk of her health and that of the baby, the interruption of her schooling, social and psychological risks related to family and peer relationships and her position of dependency. This combination of crises has a greater impact than some young girls can handle. Comprehensive services, then, are needed to meet the environmental, medical, social and educational needs of the individual girl. The steps taken to help her establish and reach realistic goals will determine whether or not she will eventually become independent. Consideration must be given that pregnant girls are being forced into adult responsibilities at a time when they are not yet out of childhood themselves.

In 1968, the California Education Code Section on physically handicapped minors was amended to include pregnant girls and to give school districts in California the responsibility and the funds for developing special classes or schools for teen-age pregnant girls. The special class makes it possible to provide more educational materials, equipment and interdisciplinary services. Adolescent pregnancy is a circumstance of life and

requires the services of not only educators, but also of health, welfare, social agencies, etc.

A major defense of the program is the fact that refusing the pregnant girl the opportunity to complete her education is not only a denial of the girl's rights, it also damages both the girl and society through increasing her chances of unemployment, underemployment and thus, welfare and dependency.

Program Components

San Mateo County, California, with a total area of 553 square miles, forms the major part of the San Francisco Peninsula. It is the second smallest county in land area within the state, but the fifth most dense, with a 1970 population of 556,234.

South San Francisco is well known as a major manufacturing and industrial center for this area of the state and is located contiguous to Daly City, immediately south of San Francisco. The South San Francisco Unified School District and the Jefferson Union High School District are located within the geographic area of these two "North County" cities.

The San Mateo Union High School District encompasses the area directly south of South San Francisco, and serves the communities of San Bruno, Millbrae, Hillsborough, Burlingame, San Mateo and Foster City. The major industry in this area is the San Francisco Airport. San Mateo Union High School District is considered a high-wealth district.

South San Francisco Unified School District and Jefferson Union High School District share jointly in the operation of the Baden High School's School-Age Mothers program, Jefferson students attending through an interdistrict contract with the South San Francisco District. This program is also operated in cooperation with the San Mateo County Department of Health and Welfare, which supplies some staff, and the services of the Information, Referral and Service Center for Pregnant Girls.

The San Mateo Union High School District's School-Age Mothers program is located, as is the South San Francisco/Jefferson program, in a continuation high school, Peninsula High School. State restrictions mandate that the School-Aged Mothers Programs "be separated from the regular day classes." The two programs I will discuss operate their school-aged mothers programs at the continuation school sites for this reason and because the continuation school programs have great flexibility.

Although operated differently, the goals and objectives of these two programs are similar and may be paraphrased in the following:

GOAL: To provide each pregnant student in the district an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and provide her with a marketable entry-level skill for post-secondary employment or further educational achievement.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To help each girl look positively and realistically at the present and the future and to help her make the best choices in order to begin a plan for the future;

2. To encourage each girl to continue her education and graduate from high school, and to aid her in developing future educational or vocational plans;

3. To insure that psychological support and guidance are available and utilized by the girl;

4. To insure that prenatal and postnatal care information is available and obtained by the girl in an attempt to increase the chance for a normal pregnancy and childbirth, thereby protecting the health of both the mother and the baby;

5. To provide entry level skills in order to permit the individual to become economically self-sufficient; and

6. To provide the girl the opportunity to receive specialized instruction, guidance and care from numerous community organizations, specializing in support to minors and young adults, thereby demonstrating a sound interagency approach to the girl's needs.

To support these needs, the South San Francisco/Jefferson program has a staff of teacher and psychologist, supplied by the school districts, and a public health nurse and a social worker attached to the school program through the San Mateo County

Department of Health and Welfare. The San Mateo District School-Age Mothers Program is staffed by a teacher, nursery supervisor, half-time school nurse, and half-time school social worker, as well as varied community support services.

In addition to early prenatal care, education and counseling, are career education counseling and training, postnatal care, family planning information, testing, group counseling, services to the baby's father and services to the girl's family. I believe it is vital to develop a program that will help the girls secure a life of dignity and self-worth, and imperative that the students know that someone does care!

Reimbursement in California at the present time can be received from state funds to the school districts through the provisions for funding of the physically handicapped. School districts may also receive funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, Education for the Disadvantaged, local funds and community services.

Funding provided by the State of California, Education Code Section 6802, as amended by AB-1267, as of July, 1973 is:

Programs Authorized	Ed. Code Section	State Support	Title 5 Admin. Code
Special Day Class self-contained, 20 ADA	6802.1	$26,500	18102
Individual Instruction	6802.1	1,300 ADA	18102.9
Other Remedial Instruction	6802.1	2,000 ADA	18102.9
Remedial Physical Education	6802.1	775 ADA	18102.9
Driver Training	17305.7	200 pupil	
Transportation	6807.8	389 ADA	18060

Determination should be made whether the program will include allowing the mother to bring her baby to school if she has not completed her education by the time the baby is born. The attendance of school-age mothers is very important to the financial part of the program because, of course, their attendance affects the amount of state support the school district will receive. Transportation is a necessary element of these school-age mothers programs, as the girls attend one school district-wide, and in some cases the distance is great. State funding for transportation is provided at $389 per unit of average daily attendance, but it is limited to the period between the fifth month of pregnancy and delivery, unless the distance exceeds two miles or unless a licensed physician and surgeon finds that walking is inimical to the health of the expectant mother or developing child. If a

district contracts with a bus company for service, it should be pointed out that the number of passengers will vary from month to month, and the distance to be traveled will change regularly. It is recommended that small buses be used instead of one large bus so that girls will not have to travel far each morning and afternoon. Also, the large buses can be rough riding for the girls when they are in their final months of pregnancy.

If made a component of the program, an equipped nursery will be necessary. The nursery can also serve as a laboratory where the young mother and, at times, the father, learn to care for the baby. The mother very often has no-one willing to care for her baby while she goes to school; therefore, the opportunity to bring the baby to school with her will be another enabling factor toward her graduation from high school.

The South San Francisco/Jefferson program has a nursery-day care, originally funded by the State of California, and now by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors as a child-care center. The center is housed in a nearby church and has a staff of two. This is a licensed day-care program for infants two weeks old to one year of age. There is a charge of 25¢ per day, with the money used for play equipment. Each young parent knows how the money is spent and why the fee is necessary.

The San Mateo Union High School District program has an infant center located on the school site. The nursery is funded by

a local, private foundation and has a full-time director. The Infant Care Center is established through California SB-1860 which provides for establishment and maintenance of programs for the care and development of infants and the training of students in their role as parents as part of the high school program. The director of the infant center provides a model for the care of and the interaction with the babies. Many young parents have had no previous exposure to parenting from their parents or other caretakers. The babies may stay in the center until the mother graduates.

Registration requirements for entrance into the School-Age Mothers Program include a verification of pregnancy signed by the parent or person legally responsible for the girl if she is unmarried, or by the girl herself if she is married.

Students must attend a minimum school day which is 240 minutes as defined by the California Administrative Code (Title 5, Section 2610).

Since pregnancy is not a permanent condition, the enrollment will not be stable. The girls enter and leave the program at various times throughout the year. The length of time a girl remains in the School-Age Mothers Program is dependent upon her delivery date. However, enrollment can be continued upon the written recommendation of a licensed physician and surgeon (California Administrative Code, Title 5, Section 3642). If this recommendation continues to be given by the doctor, it is possible for

the girl to remain in the program until graduation. Each school district should analyze this possibility and adopt a termination policy based upon the criteria of what would be most beneficial to the girl involved.

School districts in California have made the following policies regarding the length of time a student can be enrolled in a School-Age Mothers Program (pregnant minor class):*

1. Until she delivers;
2. Until physically and emotionally prepared to return to regular school;*
3. End of semester following delivery;*
4. Graduation;*
5. Marriage;
6. Six weeks postpartum;
7. Maximum time one year;*
8. Doctor's recommendation.*

*Jefferson/South San Francisco program

Each district must decide which grades it can serve. The grade span in the State of California for these special classes varies to include students from the sixth through the twelfth grade. (San Mateo Union High School District contracts for interdistrict attendance with the elementary districts when such placement is necessary.) The majority of the programs serve students in grades 9 through 12.

Girls under the age of sixteen require quite a different program from those over sixteen. The concept of motherhood is often beyond the young girl; attention span in any subject area is noticeably shorter, more individual time of the teacher is required along with more repetition of course content; and her pregnancy is likely to be the result of disturbed family relationships; therefore, much more individual counseling time will be required.

In addition to providing the courses of study to enable the girls to continue where they left off in the regular program, some special courses are desirable and necessary. As girls are admitted at any time during the school year, educational demands upon the program are different from those normally encountered by regular school situations.

Appropriate instructional materials should relate to the student, provide for initial success, give a stimulating first impression, allow for absences, serve a diversity of learning abilities, and keep within the educational budget. The program, of necessity, must be designed on an individual basis, and each girl's academic work must be scheduled to start where she left off in the regular school program.

The credits earned in the special program must be equal to the district's standards so that they will be accepted by the girl's previous school should she return there to complete her high school work. It is recommended that the original school issue the diploma

to the girls who complete requirements rather than having diplomas issued by a special program.

The academic program must be supplemented by counseling and guidance, instruction in the area of prenatal care, postnatal care, infant management and family planning (Administrative Code, Title 5, Section 3644). The Maternal-Child Health class should be designed specifically for the school-age pregnant girl. The content of the classwork must be flexible since the thirteen-year-old girls need different training from that required by the eighteen-year-old girls. An outline for such a class can include:

1. reproductive system
2. nutrition
3. pregnancy
4. labor and delivery
5. postpartum period
6. medical problems
7. infant - child care.

In addition to films, lectures and discussion period, a field trip to the obstetrics department of a local hospital can be an educational experience which will eliminate some of the fears which some of the girls will have. Other field trips depend upon the needs of the students and the offerings of the community.

It is especially important to stress nutrition and the necessity for a good diet during pregnancy. It is a known fact that the

diet of teenagers is very poor, regardless of the socio-economic status of the family. The National Institute of Child Health reports evidence that:

1. When a fetus receives inadequate nutrition, the infant is born small; and
2. Up to 50% of prematurely born infants grow up with an intellectual competence significantly below that of others of that age.

A business training program should be designed individually for each girl so she may learn the skills which will help her to become economically independent.

Counseling is an important part of the curriculum. It is needed on both an individual and group basis to enable the girls to better understand themselves and provide the opportunity for sharing of mutual concerns. Individual attention imparts the feeling that someone cares. The program should be flexible enough so that the girls may request help for their crises and problems at any time of day.

Home Economics classes should be designed to meet the unique needs of the school-age mother. Course content offered in the home economics departments in the district should be made available in addition to the Maternal Child Health class which should be required of each girl entering the program. The

curriculum should include food classes, clothing, consumer education and child development.

Physical Education classes, including prenatal exercises, can be available to each girl. This program componant is part of Remedial Physical Education (California Education Code Section 6802.1) and is funded by the state.

Many programs benefit from the help of volunteers. The South San Francisco/Jefferson program has developed "Friends to Teen-age Parents," a volunteer group formed to provide a program of volunteer adult support for isolated and inexperienced teen-age parents. Because young parents have significant problems to work through, their futures and the futures of their infant children will be determined by whatever degree of success they have while very young parents. Friends to Teen-age Parents hopes to increase the likelihood of successful parenting by establishing non-authoritarian friendships and sharing insights on managing households and child care. The program includes:

1. recruiting, training and supervision of adult volunteers wishing to provide friendship and assistance to single adolescent parents or couples with infants or young children;
2. efforts to reduce the incidence and impact of problems that frequently grow out of inexperienced parenthood, e.g. child neglect, abandonment, abuse, etc.; and

3. making appropriate referrals to professional counselors in fields such as family planning, adoptions, health, welfare, education and employment.

The problem of the pregnant teen-age girl involves not only the girl but also the infant and the young father. To date, the father has had very little support in the way of specialized programs. He is seldom talked about and rarely studied. Statistics show that the father will be approximately the same age, at the same grade level in school, and in the same socio-economic status as the girl. The very obvious fact that for every teen-age mother there is a father, usually young, has been virtually ignored by social agencies and the helping professions. We have failed to see him as a person with feelings, sensitivities, in need of help.

The counseling service should be open to the father as well as the mother, scheduled in conjunction with the girl, or on an individual basis. While much remains to be done to change attitudes toward the father, there is beginning recognition of the importance of involving him. The Vista Del Mar, California project, funded by the Children's Bureau, has demonstrated that most young fathers are responsive to offers of counseling services.

The San Mateo program conducts a bi-monthly meeting for the school-aged parents and the grandparents. The programming focuses on the roles and needs of young mothers, young fathers and

their parents. The teacher also counsels fathers about further schooling, marital and family problems, and job placement.

Some of the problems which can be expected in a School-age Mothers Program may include:

1. Excessive absences due to physical problems or baby's illness;
2. Depression caused by social and emotional problems;
3. Discipline problems;
4. Difficulty in maintaining incentive in the girls to study when the classroom atmosphere is more relaxed than what they have experienced in the regular school programs;
5. Pressure from some girls to try to change the decisions of others regarding keeping the baby or relinquishing it;
6. Dependent upon the ethnic makeup of the community, it may be necessary that special actions be taken to be sure that program is not labeled, as girls from all ethnic groups enroll in School-age Mothers programs.

There is the need for aggressive outreach techniques to reach other than middle-class white pregnant girls. Because agencies have a history of services to white girls, others who do know that an agency is there may well believe that it is not for them. Efforts to dispel this requires imaginative techniques to reach those who are being missed.

Implications

The term "high risk" has been used extensively to apply to children of poor parents who, without environmental intervention, might come to be classified as mentally retarded. "High risk" is also now applied to mothers, particularly those girls who have a child before 15 years of age. The high-risk child of a high-risk mother, if born alive, is frequently premature and is usually of lower birth weight. It is a well-known fact that prematurity in itself is associated with a variety of handicapping conditions. The estimate of school-related problems in the premature population is as high as 75%.[4] Thus, the acceleration of teen-age births due to maturation at an earlier age is not only a social problem for the young people involved, but is a major contributing factor in the increase in infant deaths and in the numbers of school-related problems, particularly if the child also resides in poverty and suffers dietary, medical and social deficits.

This leads me to ask, why do we not give exposure to all students to a child developmental curriculum in junior high and senior high schools, particularly in those communities where the data show that teen-age pregnancies are likely to occur? Each

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4 M. S. Meyer, editor, "Second Western Symposium on Learning: Early Learning"; Western Washington State College, 1971, pp. 5-21.

student can profit from learning basic techniques of child growth and development, as well as parenting interaction patterns which can prevent or alleviate handicapping conditions in a child.

There are patently several benefits students may derive from an exposure to the way infants grow:

1. Such exposure may enhance the students' appreciation of human life and the marvelously equipped body most children are born with;
2. It is hoped that students will become aware of the enormous responsibility of becoming a parent, not only of providing economic goods but also of ensuring psychological support and response to the growing infant;
3. It is hoped that students will become sensitive to what it means to be a handicapped person and to regard the handicapped person as an individual who suffers some sensory lack or deficit but still possesses the same basic needs and desires as any other human;
4. It is hoped that students will become aware of the various roles and agencies in our society for infant well-being and care so that in case of need they may seek the services of these agencies, and, of equal importance, they may see the possibility of preparing

for employment in child-related fields, either as full professionals or as supporting aides.

The elements of such an educational program can be found in the curriculum of "Exploring Childhood," Education for Parenthood, The Office of Child Development, and U. S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D. C. One objective of "Exploring Childhood" is to help students move from an emphasis on themselves to a concern for the young child, and then to a new self-awareness. A key goal is to strengthen the family unit as the most important influence in a child's life.

San Mateo County Department of Health and Welfare cooperates with the South San Francisco Unified School District in yet another way. The program coordinator of the Health and Welfare Service Center for Pregnant Girls is teaching the course, "Understanding Adolescent Sexuality." Her intent is to prepare parents as the main sources of sex-related information for their children. The focus of this course is that sexuality is part of being human; love and trust are also involved. Because of these qualities, the topic of adolescent sexuality does belong in the home and can strengthen rather than divide families. The curriculum includes sexuality during the primary years, beginning at birth, and is open to parents residing in the district. This office also serves as a counseling agency for pregnant girls, their husbands or boyfriends, and is coordinated with the School-Age Mothers Programs located in San Mateo County.

The legal status of married students should provide the framework for policies within the schools. Restrictive policies run directly counter to the married students' legal right to attend the public schools.

Perhaps school boards should consider these questions asked by Donald R. Warren in the "Phi Delta Kappen":[5] What is the effect of pregnant and/or married students on the school climate and the face of student life? Do they have a maturing or disruptive effect? Are student-teacher relationships altered? Are the size of the student population, the location of the school (e.g. in an urban center or a small town), and the marital status of the pregnant student factors to be considered in the development of programs to meet the needs of teenage parents?

The past five years have seen a marked expansion of the legal rights of teenagers. Most significant has been the reduction of the age of majority from 21 to 18 years in 40 states. In the area of medical care, several states have in the past few years, by statute or judicial decision, endorsed the "mature minor doctrine," under which a minor who is sufficiently mature to understand the nature and consequences of medical treatment, may have such treatment without parental consent.

Courts have ruled that married students and pregnant students (married or not) can participate in extracurricular activities in those instances when:

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5 October, 1972.

1. School officials could not prove that "any inconvenience or damage" was "suffered";[6] and
2. No "disruption of or interference with school activities or threat of harm to other students" could be linked to the appearance of a pregnant, unmarried student at extracurricular activities.[7]

Compulsory attendance requirements for married students have generally been held invalid by the courts, but the courts have consistently upheld the power of school boards to regulate co-curricular activities of married students. Such activities, in order to be regulated, must not be part of the academic program.

School boards cannot legally suspend a married student from the public schools on the basis of marriage alone; however, they can legally suspend a married student temporarily if the district can show that the suspension is necessary for the orderly operation of the school. School boards cannot legally suspend or expel married students from the public schools because they have committed "immoral" acts unless the school board can show that the married students are of "immoral character." The fact that a recently married girl gives birth to a child which was conceived out of wedlock is insufficient evidence for legally suspending her from the public schools.

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6 Wellson v. Calparaiso Community Schools, Indiana 1971.

7 Ordway v. Hargrove, 1971.

Some suggested guidelines, as suggested by B. B. Brown, Assistant Dean, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, to help bring school policies closer in line with each other and with the intent of the law, are:

1. Expulsion, suspension or discouragement from continued attendance in schools are not sound solutions to the problems of student marriages;
2. All school boards should study school-age marriage as it exists in each school as the first step in developing policies and practices with which both students and schools can live;
3. High school student marriages should be discouraged through classroom instructional activities on the many advantages of waiting until one has finished high school (with classroom instruction in marriage and family life problems as the broad frame of refere ce);
4. No restrictive policy should prohibit students from continued education after marriage. In no case should there be a policy to forbid married students the right to attend the public schools. It is recommended that district boards take steps to update their policies in this area;
5. State Departments of Education could help meet the problem constructively by developing regulations to be in use in all school districts of the state, thus eradicating

inconsistencies in policies and eliminating expensive legal entanglement in meeting the needs of married students.

Also, for well over a century, local school officials and courts have tended to view unwed pregnant mothers as a "contaminating influence," analogous to an infectious disease. Importance must be viewed in the context of fundamental policy questions which pregnant students pose in challenging their exclusion from school. Such exclusion is in violation of rights to equal protection under the law if dismissal from school is solely because of pregnancy (Ordway v. Hargrove, Massachusetts, 1971).

The vast majority of schools in the United States do not have classes for pregnant teenagers, nor do they provide pregnant girls with a home teacher; exclusion from school is the most prevalent action taken.

I think that, as school board members, we should ask: should the public expect school policies, programs and attitudes that open futures, not close them; that promote not social isolation but inclusiveness and affection for learning among students, including those who are pregnant, unmarried and married? Inclusiveness, of course, was one of the objectives public schools were originally intended to realize. It was a good dream. It still is.